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ABSTRACT

Designed to determine the professional reading backgrounds, habits, and interests of secondary English teachers, this study surveyed the amount of reading done in three areas: professional journals, books about the teaching of English, and books on general education. Titles of selected books (with authors) and journals are presented, along with fictitious titles, and the respondent is asked to mark a seven-point scale after each title, indicating his degree of familiarity with each item, from never having heard of it to intimate knowledge of the contents. [This document is one of those reviewed in The Research Instruments Project (TRIP) monograph "Measures for Research and Evaluation in the English Language Arts" to be published by the Committee on Research of the National Council of Teachers of English in cooperation with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills. A TRIP review which precedes the documents lists its category (Teacher Competency), title, authors, and date, and describes the instrument's purpose and physical characteristics.] (RB)

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NCTE Committee on Research

The Research Instruments Project (TRIP)

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CS 201375

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
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URBANA, ILLINOIS 61801

Category: Teacher Competency

Title: Professional Reading of Teachers Questionnaire

Authors: Theodore W. Hipple and Thomas R. Giblin

Description of the Instrument:

Purpose: To determine the professional reading backgrounds and interests of secondary English teachers.

Date of Construction: 1971

Physical Description: The PRTQ is in three parts: professional journals, books about the teaching of English, and books on general education. Titles of selected books (with authors) and journals are presented, along with fictitious titles; and the respondent is asked to mark a seven-point scale after each title, indicating his degree of familiarity with it, from never having heard of it to intimate knowledge of it.

Validity, Reliability, and Normative Data:

No validity or reliability data are offered. The inclusion of fictitious titles to check on the honesty of the respondents does contribute indirectly to the validity of the PRTQ. Validity is strengthened, too, if one accepts the assumption that the two authors were experienced English educators and could therefore select an appropriately wide range of journal and book titles and, as well, disguise the fictitious titles sufficiently so they would fulfill their purpose.

Data from the study in which the PRTQ was used permit comparisons of future findings with those from 386 Florida teachers who completed the questionnaire.

Ordering Information:

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Related documents:

Also available in Theodore W. Hipple and Thomas R. Giblin, "The Professional Reading of English Teachers in Florida," Research in the Teaching of English, 5 (Fall 1971), 153-164.

Theodore W. Hipple
Thomas R. Giblin
"Professional Reading of Teachers Questionnaire"
1971

RESEARCH IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 2, FALL 1971

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Reality can indeed be disturbing—particularly if it taps assessment of the reading and awareness of qualified English personnel. Through a questionnaire technique, Mr. Hipple and Mr. Giblin sampled selected professional reading behavior of 386 English teachers in the state of Florida. Although their rate of return was only 67%, the randomness of the returns suggests an adequate basis for their conservative interpretations. While the fineness of discrimination between journal titles might account for some of the responses, the implications for the preparation of English teachers, teacher education in general, in-service programs, and dissemination of information is only too apparent.—Reviewed by W. R. P.

The professional reading of English teachers in Florida

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University of Florida
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The practicing secondary school English teacher in Florida is not likely to be engaged in much professional reading related either to education in general or to teaching English in particular. Furthermore, his university preparation has not been remarkably rich with professional reading experiences. Though blunt and unflattering, these generalizations appear inescapable after one studies the results yielded in a survey designed to test the knowledge English teachers have of educational journals and books.

In May, 1970, a survey of reading habits was sent to 580 randomly selected teachers of English in the state of Florida.

The survey listed six journal titles related to the teaching of English, ten journal titles related to education, and 20 book titles in each field. Also included was a numbering system enabling respondents to indicate the degree of their familiarity with the works listed.

As a precaution against a teacher's checking items whether he had read them or not, exactly half of the journal and book titles listed were fictitious. (In this report the imaginary titles are printed in lower case; in the actual survey, of course, all titles were printed alike. See Tables 3–5.) The anonymous survey also solicited information about the respondents' education and teaching experience and about their membership in professional organizations.

Of the 580 sent, 386 completed and usable surveys were returned. On these returns, the failure of the fictitious title to attain wide mention attests to the validity of the results received. Had, for example, the Langley title (a fictitious one) outranked the Hook title or the Moffett title (both real), then the entire set of results might have been rendered suspect. It appears that, for the most part, the respondents were honest, even though such integrity revealed a distressing lack of acquaintance with what has been written about education generally and English teaching specifically.

THE SAMPLE

The selection of the approximately 580 teachers of secondary school English in the state of Florida to whom the survey was sent was facilitated through the offices of either the county supervisor of language arts or the county representative of the Florida Educational Research and Development Council, a statewide organization. This person was asked to distribute the survey sheets sent to him to randomly selected secondary school English teachers within his county district. The returns indicated that the desired randomness was attained, with completed and usable surveys coming from 48 counties in Florida. Though the instrument permitted no exact way of checking whether all the returned surveys from one county came from one school (and, hence, from one English department), this appeared not to be the case, as reported by the differences in school populations identified on surveys returned from those counties which have more than one secondary school.

Randomness was further indicated by the education and ex

perience of the teachers who completed the survey. Of the responding teachers, 37% (125) possessed a master's degree or higher, 63% (261) a bachelor's degree. There were no returns from teachers who had not earned at least a bachelor's degree. Moreover, the experience levels of the respondents ranged from one year to 36 years. These figures are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Years of Experience and Education of Respondents

	1–3	4–7	8–12	13–18	over 18 years	Totals
B.A.	88	62	42	27	42	261
M.A.	16	20	22	32	35	125
						386

Participation in professional organizations reflected another dimension of the variety of the survey population. Questions were asked about membership in four organizations, two national and two state: The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the National Education Association (NEA), the Florida Council of Teachers of English (FCTE), and the Florida Education Association (FEA). The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Membership in Professional Organizations

	NCTE	NEA	FCTE	FEA
B.A.	119	107	128	110
M.A.	76	66	85	70

THE RESULTS

Part II of the instrument sought information about the reading of journals related to the teaching of English in particular and to education in general. As explained above, exactly half of the titles listed in the survey were fictitious. The data yielded is presented in Table 3. (Fictitious titles are indicated in lower case print; real, in upper case.)

Part III of the instrument questioned respondents about their familiarity with books related either to the teaching of English or to education in general. Table 4 presents the information received about the reading of books dealing with the

Table 3
Readership in Professional Journals

Meanings of Response Code Numbers

1. I have never heard of this journal.
2. I am slightly familiar with this journal, but do not recall reading it
3. I once used this journal some, but no longer read it.
4. I do not subscribe to this journal, but do read it occasionally.
5. I do not subscribe to this journal, but do read it regularly.
6. I subscribe to this journal, but seldom read much of it.
7. I subscribe to this journal and read it regularly.

Name of Journal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Degree
The Composition Teacher	148	68	15	28	2	0	0	B.A.
	61	40	5	18	1	0	0	M.A.
ELEMENTARY ENGLISH	92	107	28	27	3	0	4	B.A.
	40	45	16	20	1	2	1	M.A.
THE ENGLISH JOURNAL	7	12	16	67	53	13	93	B.A.
	0	6	1	27	20	3	65	M.A.
English News and Notes	161	50	6	31	7	0	3	B.A.
	68	30	8	12	4	0	3	M.A.
MEDIA AND METHODS	78	49	25	52	27	3	27	B.A.
	25	23	7	30	22	1	17	M.A.
Secondary School English	90	70	25	61	13	1	2	B.A.
	45	30	15	27	6	0	2	M.A.
Classroom Digest	177	54	10	15	5	0	0	B.A.
	86	21	7	9	1	0	0	M.A.
CLEARING HOUSE	144	62	20	29	3	2	1	B.A.
	45	25	16	18	8	2	1	M.A.
Contemporary Issues in Secondary Education	171	57	5	25	1	0	1	B.A.
	80	23	7	14	0	0	1	M.A.
Education in America	166	67	7	15	4	0	2	B.A.
	77	31	4	13	0	0	0	M.A.
JOURNAL OF SECONDARY EDUCATION	112	76	17	49	4	0	3	B.A.
	48	33	19	22	3	0	0	M.A.
PHI DELTA KAPPAN	113	71	13	28	4	1	1	B.A.
	44	37	9	17	8	3	7	M.A.
SCHOOL AND SOCIETY	172	52	8	27	2	0	0	B.A.
	62	21	17	22	3	0	0	M.A.
Secondary School Teaching	136	76	15	30	4	0	0	B.A.
	67	31	6	19	2	0	0	M.A.
TODAY'S EDUCATION (formerly NEA JOURNAL)	28	32	26	54	18	11	82	B.A.
	8	11	17	16	11	8	54	M.A.
Today's High Schools	167	47	9	32	6	0	0	B.A.
	79	25	6	16	2	0	1	M.A.

teaching of English. (Again, fictitious titles are presented in lower case.)

Table 4

The Reading of Books about the Teaching of English

Meanings of Response Code Numbers:

1. I have never heard of this book.
2. I have heard of this book, but have not read any of it.
3. I have read parts of this book.
4. I have read all of this book.
5. I have studied this book carefully and feel that I know it rather well. (If you own any of these books, please add a "6" to the number already in the blank.)

Author and Book Title	1	2	3	4	5	6	Degree
Allanson: English for all American Youth	225	21	6	0	0	0	B.A.
	102	17	5	0	1	0	M.A.
Brauer and Snead: Composition in the English Class	161	51	47	2	1	2	B.A.
	74	21	23	6	1	1	M.A.
BURTON: LITERATURE STUDY IN THE HIGH SCHOOLS	113	38	57	21	29	28	B.A.
	30	15	37	13	30	23	M.A.
Clark: English for Democratic Living	224	28	9	1	0	1	B.A.
	98	19	6	2	0	0	M.A.
COMMISSION ON ENGLISH OF THE CEEB: FREEDOM AND DISCIPLINE IN ENGLISH	166	35	37	12	12	9	B.A.
	58	19	15	12	21	13	M.A.
Committee of Nine of the NCTE: A Guide to the Teaching of English	115	49	65	25	8	7	B.A.
	39	26	37	14	9	4	M.A.
DIXON: GROWTH THROUGH ENGLISH	196	44	15	5	3	1	B.A.
	80	20	14	6	5	6	M.A.
EVANS AND WALKER: TRENDS IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH	149	50	48	14	2	3	B.A.
	66	27	23	5	4	3	M.A.
Fryaan: Language Teaching and Language Learning	214	24	23	1	0	0	B.A.
	85	25	12	2	1	0	M.A.
GUTH: ENGLISH TODAY AND TOMORROW	191	37	21	6	8	3	B.A.
	77	27	15	3	3	2	M.A.
Hendrick: English during the Secondary School Years	202	30	25	4	3	2	B.A.
	87	23	12	2	1	0	M.A.
HOOK: THE TEACHING OF HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH	91	34	62	20	57	51	B.A.
	30	10	32	22	31	26	M.A.
Langley: The Teaching of High School Literature	139	51	52	15	8	8	B.A.
	70	16	25	7	6	3	M.A.

Author and Book Title	1	2	3	4	5	6	Degree
MOFFETT: A STUDENT-CENTERED LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM, K-13	169	46	28	12	9	9	B.A.
	68	28	23	1	5	2	M.A.
MULLER: THE USES OF ENGLISH	179	43	26	8	8	11	B.A.
	79	17	22	1	3	1	M.A.
Pierce and Anderson: English in Grades 7-12	211	29	17	1	6	1	B.A.
	101	11	10	0	0	0	M.A.
ROSENBLATT: LITERATURE AS EXPLORATION	190	33	33	5	4	2	B.A.
	79	23	17	4	2	2	M.A.
Steelman: Poetry for Secondary School English Study	172	40	35	10	8	5	B.A.
	85	21	16	3	0	0	M.A.
THOMAS: TRANSFORMATIONAL GRAMMAR AND THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH	92	55	75	22	20	21	B.A.
	19	17	35	10	14	13	M.A.
Willard: The study of English	218	26	20	1	1	2	B.A.
	97	13	11	4	0	0	M.A.

Table 5 presents the information received on books dealing with education in general.

Table 5
The Reading of Books about Education in General

Meanings of Response Code Numbers:
1. I have never heard of this book.
2. I have heard of this book, but have not read any of it.
3. I have read parts of this book.
4. I have read all of this book.
5. I have studied this book carefully and feel that I know it rather well. (If you own any of these books, please add a "6" to the number already in the blank.)

Author and Book Title	1	2	3	4	5	6	Degree
Atkins: The Society of the Secondary School	221	27	10	2	2	1	B.A.
	100	14	8	0	1	0	M.A.
BARZUN: TEACHER IN AMERICA	191	33	28	5	7	5	B.A.
	55	28	25	11	4	4	M.A.
BLOOM: TAXONOMY OF EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES	136	15	67	21	23	20	B.A.
	43	18	36	13	13	9	M.A.
Brown and Standish: The Dynamic of Secondary Education	225	20	7	1	0	0	B.A.
	97	17	7	1	1	1	M.A.
BRUNER: THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION	172	31	39	12	10	7	B.A.
	61	21	23	6	11	7	M.A.

Author and Book Title	1	2	3	4	5	6	Degree
CONANT: THE AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL TODAY	77	26	81	46	34	21	B.A.
	11	13	41	31	27	16	M.A.
Dorsey: Adolescents and Their Schools	196	37	21	3	3	1	B.A.
	85	19	16	1	1	0	M.A.
Fellows: Teaching for Maturity	223	29	10	1	0	0	B.A.
	96	21	5	0	0	0	M.A.
FRIEDENBURG: THE VANISHING ADOLESCENT	186	15	19	6	6	5	B.A.
	74	24	15	3	6	3	M.A.
HOLT: HOW CHILDREN FAIL	120	18	52	23	20	13	B.A.
	10	21	23	28	8	4	M.A.
HIGHET: THE ART OF TEACHING	160	33	50	10	10	8	B.A.
	59	22	18	10	13	10	M.A.
Jarrett: High School: Teacher, Pupils and Programs	218	24	18	3	0	0	B.A.
	81	19	20	2	0	0	M.A.
Knowland: The Uses and Abuses of the Schools	217	31	10	5	1	0	B.A.
	91	22	6	1	0	0	M.A.
LEONARD: EDUCATION AND ECSTASY	212	33	11	4	3	0	B.A.
	85	21	11	3	2	3	M.A.
MAYER: THE SCHOOLS	218	26	12	5	2	1	B.A.
	90	17	11	3	2	3	M.A.
Neilsen: The Science of Teaching	215	83	13	2	0	0	B.A.
	95	12	16	0	0	0	M.A.
Olney: Educational Objectives in Secondary Education	106	53	77	16	16	8	B.A.
	18	26	31	13	5	1	M.A.
POSTMAN AND WEINGARTNER: TEACHING AS A SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY	183	15	23	5	7	6	B.A.
	71	29	14	8	3	5	M.A.
Saunders: Democratic Education in Autocratic Schools	234	22	5	2	0	0	B.A.
	108	12	3	0	0	0	M.A.
Tichenor: Subject-Matter Teaching in Student-Centered Classes	210	30	19	2	2	1	B.A.
	86	25	9	2	1	1	M.A.

SOME ANALYSES

1. Some of the English teacher respondents identified journals and books which do not even exist as ones they had read: e.g., Langley's *The teaching of high school literature* was reported as read by 113 respondents and owned by 11 of these teachers. If one is tempted, however, to conclude from these data that the respondents were dishonest, he may be doing them a disservice. While it is possible that some of the teachers checked imaginary titles as ones they were familiar with

simply to enhance the picture of their professional reading; it is equally possible that some of the teachers who made such indications were simply mistaken. Book titles in education have a remarkable similarity, and a teacher could rather easily confuse an imaginary book with a real one he had read a few years earlier. A teacher with several years of experience, for example, might recall having read a particular book for an education course eight or ten years earlier; a title listed on the survey might *seem* to be the title of the book he had read. Hence, he identified it as one he had read. A student of these data cannot, in short, infer universal duplicity when there exists such a forceful potential for simple and honest error.

Then, too, the events of the moment may have influenced many teachers. The most widely studied imaginary book was Olney's *Educational objectives in secondary education*. At the time the teachers completed this survey, most were involved in yearlong statewide work on behavioral objectives. Doubtlessly many of them had studied some printed materials on such objectives (very possibly Mager's *Preparing instructional objectives*) and concluded, quite honestly even if mistakenly, that the Olney title was the one they had examined. Again, then simple error and not deliberate fabrication caused these data.

Nonetheless, one's charitable assertion of error must not hide what surely exists to some degree: the purposeful distortion by a few teachers of this report of their professional reading habits and libraries. No less than teachers in other disciplines, some teachers of secondary school English view with a sense of self-guilt the paucity of their professional reading. Quite naturally, they hope to appear better read than they are. Even though the survey was kept anonymous, even though the results of a particular teacher's responses never reached his superiors but were sent directly to the authors, no doubt some teachers wanted to seem well-read, a condition easily achieved by the expedient of marking a "3" or "4" where a "1" or "2" would have been more truthful. It follows that such teachers would reveal themselves occasionally with their indications of substantial familiarity with imaginary journals and books.

2. Of course, the really pertinent data concern the familiarity teachers have with journals and books which do exist, and here the picture is somewhat depressing. For whatever reasons (and a few of these will be examined in the con-

clusion to this section) teachers of secondary school English are not presently reading widely in professional literature, nor have they read widely in the past. A few exceptions to these generalizations stand out, notably the *English Journal* and *Today's Education* among the journals and works like Burton's, Hook's, and Conant's among the books. Even these, however, need further examination.

The *English Journal* and *Today's Education* are membership bonuses, respectively, of the National Council of Teachers of English and the National Education Association. When one joins these organizations, he automatically receives these journals. Comparison of Tables 2 and 3 reveals that membership in these organizations does not, however, automatically insure the careful reading of the journals. Of the 185 belonging to the NCTE, only 158 used a "7" to indicate thorough reading of the *English Journal*.

Among the books, Burton's *Literature in the secondary schools* was one of the most popular. Professor Dwight M. Burton has for many years been a professor in and chairman of the Department of English Education at Florida State University, the largest teacher-training institution in Florida. It is highly probable that more than a few of the Florida teachers who completed this survey studied at FSU, possibly under the direction of Professor Burton himself. Moreover, Professor Burton has been very active in the state of Florida, working tirelessly for better English teaching. In short, his name is well-known among Florida English teachers. The popularity of his book may, therefore, be at least somewhat a function of the geographical area in which the survey was conducted.

J. N. Hook's *The teaching of high school English* has been the most popular of the "methods" texts used in undergraduate methods courses, almost since its initial edition in 1950 (it is now in its third edition). A person who elects to teach English is typically required to take a methods course; not infrequently the book studied will be Professor Hook's.

The most popular of the general books was James Conant's *The American high school today*. Here, too, there is reason to question the validity of its popularity, as Conant's book achieved that rarity among books about education: it attained "best seller" status. Its popularity among the responding English teachers may be owing somewhat to its popularity with the general public and may be of limited inferential use as an

indication of the amount of professional reading engaged in by English teachers.

In no way should these remarks be construed as disparagement of these three books. All three are excellent works and deserve widespread readership. The more distressing finding, in fact, is that despite the foregoing explanations, there are substantial numbers of responding teachers who have not heard of these books: 135 had not heard of Burton's book, 121 were ignorant of Hook's, 88 were unaware of Conant's.

3. As with these three books, the overall lack of readership of some of the journals and books merits further attention. *Media and Methods* has been on the cutting edge of innovation in the English classroom for the last several years, perhaps more than any other single source. This significant journal has been largely responsible for the advocacy and legitimization of media study in the English classroom. Yet 103 of the responding teachers had never ever heard of the journal and another 72, though they had heard of it, had never seen a copy. Of those magazines which direct their attention to education in general (as opposed to the first list of journals, which primarily are slanted toward the teaching of English), none except the aforementioned *Today's Education* had any substantial following among the respondents to this survey.

With books, the situation is much the same. For example, Rosenblatt's *Literature as exploration* was unknown to 269 teachers. Yet it is the work about which James R. Squire, former executive secretary of the National Council of Teachers of English, writes "It is one of the very few books on the teaching of English that I believe all teachers should read." The reports of the Anglo-American Conference on the Teaching of English fared no better. This extraordinary gathering of scholars in English, English education, drama, linguistics and psychology from the British Islands, Canada, and the United States met at Dartmouth College in 1966 and engaged in penetrating and intelligent discussion of the issues which face English teachers. Called the Dartmouth Seminar, this important conference authorized two different summaries of its proceedings: Dixon's *Growth through English*, a work intended for members of the profession, and Muller's *The uses of English*, a work intended for the lay public but useful also to teachers and other professionals. Of the 386 respondents, 276 had never heard of Dixon's work, 258 of Muller's.

Another work regarded as of substantial importance by scholars in English and English education was the report *Freedom and discipline in English*, issued by the Commission on English of the College Entrance Examination Board; it, too, had small readership, with 224 respondents unfamiliar even with the title.

Examination of the data with respect to general books in education reveals a reading lack similar to that demonstrated in the books more closely related to the teaching of English. Older but still relevant and useful works like Barzun's *Teacher in America* and Highet's *The art of teaching* were no more popular than more recent works like Holt's *How children fail* or Postman and Weingartner's *Teaching as a subversive activity*. The numbers of respondents who had not heard of these works are, respectively, 246, 219, 160, 254.

4. When possible, observations should go beyond a mere repetition of the results to include some judgments about the causes of the particular data received. The dominant question about the yield of this survey is, Why have these teachers read so little in these important journals and works? One answer, of course, centers on the sample, that its randomness resulted in the selection of ill-prepared teachers who have made little attempt to keep professionally up-to-date. Such an inference does an injustice to the many teachers among the respondents who have read widely. Furthermore, the very randomness of the sample suggests that these teachers differ little from their counterparts all over the country. Each teacher surveyed had at least a bachelor's degree from an accredited teacher-training institution. One must, therefore, look beyond the group of respondents to ascertain the answer to the question of the limited professional readings.

In all likelihood the answer lies in the nature of the English teacher's job. On the one hand, the English teacher works long and hard hours simply to keep on top of his duties. Typically, he teaches five classes comprising approximately 150 students. He has lessons to prepare, tests to construct, and, above all, compositions to correct. A 300-word theme from each of his students represents, in total, the same amount of reading as in an average sized professional book. Some English teachers, rightly or not, receive themes this long from each of their students *each week*.

On the other hand, what reading time the English teacher

has must be apportioned among several competing areas of concentration. As a student of literature he feels a continuing obligation to read the Dickens novel or the Ibsen play he has not yet read; he must also read criticism of this literature. But he cannot ignore the contemporary best sellers which his abler students are reading, perhaps on loan from their parents. Nor can he ever forget his need to study that literature written especially for the adolescents whom he teaches daily; the latest novel by Betty Cavanna may be the answer to motivating Susan, who simply will not read. Finally, and that is precisely the place it achieves among the reading priorities of many English teachers, comes professional reading, the study of those journals and books related to teaching English in particular and to education in general. It is not that these teachers find professional reading to be valueless; it is, often, that their time is too limited and that other areas of reading seem to them to merit their first attenion. Also, as this study suggests, many English teachers are simply unaware of what exists in professional literature.

Attempts to find the "why" of limited professional reading, however, must not obscure the obvious need to discover methods through which English teachers can become more familiar with educational literature. Though such methods are beyond the scope of this report of research, English educators, both those training prospective teachers and those engaged in in-service work with practicing teachers, must still seek new ways to encourage professional reading.